

Letter to DEP re land acquisition Purchase

**TO: Acquisition and Restoration Council
c/o Shauna Allen, Staff Director
Office of Conservation Services, Division of State Lands
Department of Environmental Protection
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard, M.S. 140
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3000**

RE: Florida Forever Applications:

[I, We ----] strongly supports (1) the purchase of the 8.43 acre parcel adjacent to Don Pedro Island State Park within the Charlotte Harbor Estuary Florida Forever Project Area and (2) the purchase of a conservation easement permanently conserving over 2,390 acres of the MJ Ranch Florida Forever Application submitted by the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast and encourages the Acquisition and Restoration Council to add the project[s] to the Florida Forever list of priority acquisition projects.

1. Charlotte Harbor Estuary Florida Forever Project Addition - Don Pedro Island State Park Addition, Charlotte County

This 8.47-acre parcel abuts the southern mainland boundary of Don Pedro Island State Park and is within the park's Optimum Boundary and could be a valuable addition to the existing park to enhance water access and visitor amenities as well as help buffer the park from surrounding neighborhoods. The property is located on a canal that flows into Lemon Bay and already has a dock and boat slips.

2. MJ Ranch/Myakka Island Conservation Corridor, Manatee County

The Florida Forever application proposes the purchase of a perpetual conservation easement to protect 2,390+ acres of the MJ Ranch in eastern Manatee County. The property contains more than 5.5 miles of shoreline on the Myakka River. Protecting this property conserves the last large ranch along the Myakka between the Myakka River State Park and Flatford Swamp, the headwaters of the Myakka River. The effort to conserve the land buffering the state designated "Wild & Scenic" Myakka River further protects Charlotte Harbor, an Outstanding Florida Water and a nationally recognized estuary, and the Gulf of Mexico. The operating cattle ranch contains a large landscape of diverse wildlife habitats, including extensive grazing land and grasslands, scrubby flatwoods, mesic hammock and river. These provide myriad resources for imperiled plant and animal species.

Thank you for your consideration.

Your Name